

ADDRESS

James ^{8/14/57} of THE United Irishmen

UNITED IRISHMEN

OF DUBLIN

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TO THE

FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE

IN LONDON.

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A D D R E S S
OF THE
UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN.

F R E E M A S O N S' T A V E R N,
Saturday, December 15, 1792.

AT a GENERAL MEETING of the Society of
the FRIENDS of the PEOPLE, associated
for the Purpose of obtaining a *Parliamentary*
Reform, held this Day,

SAMUEL WHITEREAD, Junior, Esq. M. P.
in the Chair;

Resolved unanimously,
THAT the following Letter, addressed to
the President of this Society, and the Answer of
the Committee, be printed and published.

“ UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN.

B R I D G A
“ HONORABLE SIMON BUTLER *in the Chair,*

THE Society of United Irishmen of Dublin address the Friends of the People at London impressed with the resemblance in the title, nature, and destination of their respective institutions; and acting under that fraternity of feeling which such a coincidence naturally inspires. The title which you bear is a glorious one; and we too are Friends of the People. If we be asked, ‘Who are the People?’ We turn not our eyes here and there, to this party, or to that persuasion, and cry, ‘Lo! the People;’ but we look around us without partiality or predilection, and we answer, ‘The multitude of human beings, the living mass of humanity associated to exist, to subsist, and to be happy. In them and them only, we find the original of social authority, the measure of political value, and the pedestal of legitimate power.

“ As Friends of the People, upholding their rights and deplored their sufferings, the great object of this Society is a real representation of

the Irish nation in an Irish Parliament; and as friends of the *whole* people, we support the necessity of Catholic emancipation, as a means of making representation what it ought to be, free, equal, and entire. If the people of one country be not obliged to obey the laws of another, on the same principle when the people resident in a country have no sort of influence over the legislature that legislature will receive rather a discretionary acquiescence than legitimate obedience; and as this discretionary is dangerous, state because precarious, a change becomes necessary for the peace and happiness of the nation, violence being the last measure to which rational beings will resort.

" The present state of Ireland, with regard to population, is upwards of four millions, three of which are of the Catholic religion; and with regard to political freedom,

" I. The state of *Protestant* representation is as follows: 17 boroughs have no resident elector; 16 have but one; 16 have from two to five; 90 have 13 electors each; 90 persons return for 106 venal boroughs, that is 212 members out of 300, the whole number. 54 members are returned by five noblemen and four bishops; and borough influence has given land-

lords such power in the counties, as makes them boroughs also--In short, representation, which in its nature is only a deposit, has been converted into a property; and that constitution which is founded on equal liberty, and which declares that no tax shall be levied without the 'Good will' of the people, is totally perverted in its principles, and corrupted in its practice; yet the majesty of the people is still quoted with affected veneration; and if the crown be ostensibly placed in a part of the Protestant portion, it is placed in mockery, for it is encircled with thorns.

" 2. With regard to the *Catholics*, the following is the simple and sorrowful fact: Three millions, every one of whom has an interest in the state, and collectively give it its value, are taxed without being represented, and bound by laws to which they have not given consent. They now require a share of political liberty, in the participation of the elective franchise, and of civil liberty in the privilege of serving on Grand Juries. There can be no civil without political liberty; and in requiring the right of suffrage, they, in reality, demand only a safeguard for their religion, their property, and their lives.

"The code of penal laws against the Catholics, reduce oppression into a system; the action and pressure of the system continually accumulating without any re-action on the part of the sufferers sunk in the lethargy of servitude, has confirmed the governing portion of the people in a habit of domination. This *habit*, mixing with the antipathies of past times, and the irritations of the moment, has impressed a strange persuasion, that the rights of the plurality are Protestant *property*, and that the birth right of millions, born and to be born, continue the spoils of war, and booty of conquest. The perversion of the understanding perverts the heart; and this Protestant ascendancy, as it calls itself, uniting power with passion, and hating the Catholics because it has injured them, on a bare inquisitorial suspicion insufficient to criminate an individual, would erase a whole people from the roll of citizenship, and for the sins (if they were sins) of remote ancestors, would attaint their remotest posterity. We have read, and read with horror, that Louis XI. ordered the children to be placed under the scaffold, where the father was beheaded, that they might be sprinkled with his blood.

" It is, we think, by this unequal distribu-

tion of popular privilege, that its very nature has, in this kingdom, been corrupted; and from the moment that equality of rights was overturned, and general liberty became particular power, the public mind has been split into a conflict of factions. General distribution of the elective franchise would make corruption impracticable; but when common right becomes the property of person, party, or persuasion, it acquires a value equally unnatural and unconstitutional; is bought and sold; rises or falls, like any marketable commodity. The deprivation of the elective franchise, on the one hand, robs a great majority of the nation of an invaluable blessing; and its *accumulation* in the hands of the Protestant portion, operates on that very portion as a curse. The right of *all* heaped up and hoarded by the *few*, becomes a public pest, and the nutriment of the constitution is changed into its poison.

“ The iniquitous monopoly rests in boroughs, spreads its contagion through counties, taints morals and manners, makes elections mere fairs for the traffic of franchise and the sale of men; in place of that nationality of mind, which spreads its parental embrace around a whole people, substitutes the envious excluding spirit of selfish corporations,

corporations, and swelling, at length into monstrous and gigantic ascendancy; holds forth an hundred thousand hands to bribe and betray, and tramples with an hundred thousand feet on those miserable millions, who have lost their only guarantee against injustice and oppression.

" Instructed by the genius of the constitution, and the genuine spirit of the laws; instructed of by late, all that has been spoken, or written, or acted or suffered in the cause of Freedom; instructed by the late revolution in America; by the late revolution of Ireland; by the late revolution in France; hearing of all that has been done over the face of the globe for liberty, and feeling all that can be suffered from the want of it; reading the Charter of Independence to Ireland, and listening to the spirit-stirring voice of her great deliverer; actuated, in fine, by that imperishable spark in the bosom of man, which the servitude of a century may smother, but cannot extinguish, the Catholics of this country have been lessened into liberty, have learned to know their rights; to be sensible of their wrongs; and to detail, by peaceful delegation, their grievances, rather than endure without obedience. You! ---in either kingdom, who reproach the Catholics of Ireland for asserting the

the rights of nature, burn your books, tear your charters, break down your free press, and crumble to pieces those moulds which have cast liberty in so fair a form, as to make Catholics feel what Protestants have felt, and join their admiration and love with those of a worshipping world.

" This Society, and many other societies have associated to create that union of power, and that brotherhood of affection among all the inhabitants of this island, which is the interest as well as duty of all. We are all Irishmen; and our object is to unite the different descriptions of religion in the cause of our common country. From the most opposite points in the wide circumference of religion we tend, with increasing velocity, to the same centre of political union. A reform in parliament, preceding Catholic enfranchisement, would be in its nature partial and exclusive; and unless a reform immediately follows that emancipation (which it will certainly do) the extension of elective franchise, would only add to the mass of corruption. The centre of our union is fixed and immovable. The Presbyterian wishes national freedom, The Catholic aspires to nothing more; nor can either of them be brought to believe that those varieties

varieties of religious faith, which may be deemed the pleasure of the Creator, should be made the engines of political torture to any of his creatures. Too long have our people been set in array of battle against each other; too long have the rancour and revenge of our ancestors been left as a legacy of blood to their posterity; too long has one limb of the social body been tied down, until it had nearly lost all feeling, life and energy. It is our wish, it is our hope, to give Ireland the full and free possession of both her arms, her Catholic arm as well as Protestant arm, that she may the better embrace her friends, or grapple with her foes.

“ Such are the principles and practice of our institution, which, having neither power nor patronage, but merely the energy of honesty, has not only been distinguished by the calumnies of those, who are born only to bite the heel, and be crushed under foot, but has been honoured by the obloquy of men, who fill the first offices in the state. From them we appeal to natural right and eternal justice, which ought ever to be established without compromise or reservation. From them we appeal to those, who call themselves Friends of the People. Look not upon Ireland with an

eye

eye of indifference. The period of Irish insignificance is passing fast away. If the nation ever appeared contemptible, it was because the nation did not act; but no sooner in the late war was it abandoned by government, than it rose to distinction as a people. As to any union between the islands, believe us when we assert, that our union rests upon our mutual independence. We shall love each other, *if we be left to ourselves*. It is the union of minds, which ought to bind these nations together. Reciprocal interests and mutual wants will ever secure mutual affection; but, were any other union to be forced, and force only could effect it, you would endanger your liberties, and we should lose our rights; you would feel the influence of the crown increased beyond all sufferance, and we should lose the name and energies of a people, with every hope or raising to its merited station in the map of mankind, this noble and neglected island, "for which God has done so much and man so little."

Signed by order,

"THOMAS WRIGHT, SECRETARY."

6 JU 62

Dublin, October 26, 1792.

A N S W E R

Methid yet availigel or ingin feling a chilien
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ANSWER

Of the Committee of the Society of the FRIENDS
of the PEOPLE, associated for the Purpose
of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

Committee Rooms, No. 52. Fleet-street, Soco.

SIR,

WE have received by the hand of Mr. Archdekin, the favour of your Address, and shall take the earliest opportunity of laying it before the Society of the Friends of the People, at their first Meeting, which is appointed to be held on the 15th of next month. We cannot, however, delay expressing the pleasure we feel in finding so large a portion of our fellow-citizens entertaining sentiments so just, and expressing these sentiments with an energy that commands assent. Our endeavours must necessarily be confined to this Island, and can have no immediate relation to Ireland, which ever must possess

possess a perfect right to legislate for herself.
Whether we shall give or take the example,
our wishes will ever be earnest for your success.

In name and by Order of the Committee,

November 27, 1792.

(Signed) GEORGE ROUS, Chairman.

To the President of the Society of
United Irishmen, in Dublin.

6 JU 62

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